

AUGUST 1947

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The Twentieth Ordinary General Meeting of the Associated British Picture Corporation Limited was held recently in London, Sir Philip Warter, the Chairman, presiding.

The following is an extract from his statement, circulated with the report and accounts for the year to 31st March 1947.

The trading profits of the group at £2,542,274 are higher than last year by some £308,000. The trading profits before E.P.T. show a substantial decline, but since the group earned more than its standard profit it has benefited by the application of the reduced rate of 60 per cent. for the year to 31st December 1946, and the termination of such tax at that date.

The net profits are approximately £306,000 higher at £956,174. An increased final dividend is recommended of 20 per cent., making a total of 30 per cent., less tax, compared with 25 per cent., less tax, last year.

The gross theatre receipts at the 418 theatres operated by the group for the first ten months of the year under review showed an increase, but owing to the restrictions of showing time imposed during the fuel crisis and the shortage of fuel in many of the theatres, the total figures for the year were slightly lower at £19,955,004 than those for the year to 31st March 1946.

Despite the restricted studio space available, it has been possible during the year to produce three important films: *Piccadilly Incident*—the winner of the "National Film Award"—*While the Sun Shines* and *Temptation Harbour*. The public reaction to these and other British films has been encouraging.

During the year the Corporation acquired the share capital of Anglo-American Film Corporation Ltd., and secured the distribution rights of all films produced at British National Studios, Elstree. The business of the Anglo-American Corporation has been merged with Pathé Pictures Ltd. Owing to the increasing demand for short films and our endeavour to improve still further the quality of "Pathé News," it has been decided to modernise and re-equip the laboratories.

The peak in cinema attendances has now passed and we must anticipate a somewhat lower level of receipts. All items of overhead expenses are appreciably increasing.

As an offset the repeal of E.P.T. will ease the burden of taxation, and it is reasonable to assume that the net results of the current year's trading will prove satisfactory.

The report was adopted.

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THEATRE WORLD



Murray Norman, N.Y.

Margaret Leighton

● FOLLOWING her brilliant work for the Old Vic Company, Miss Leighton has further established herself as an actress of outstanding gifts in Robert Donat's revival of *The Sleeping Clergyman* now at the Criterion Theatre, in which she appears in three different roles. Miss Leighton's first appearance on the stage was at Birmingham, in 1938, and it was while she was with Sir Barry Jackson's Company at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1944 that she was invited to join the Old Vic, making her London debut in *Peer Gynt* at the New Theatre in September 1944.



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Edited by Frances Stephens

August 1947

THE past few weeks have been busy ones in the West End and a number of the more recent new productions will be reviewed next month, including *The Voice of the Turtle* (Piccadilly); *Trespass* (Globe); *The Nightingale* (Princes); *Peace In Our Time* (Lyric); the Sartre plays at the Lyric, Hammersmith; *Dr. Angelus*, by James Bridie (Phoenix) and *My Wives And I*, by Edward Percy (Strand). (1066 And All That has moved to the Palace Theatre.)

Michael Benthall's production of *The Merchant of Venice*, at Stratford, has aroused much interest. The Memorial Theatre is enjoying a most successful season with crowded houses and cosmopolitan audiences. The final new production of the 1947 Festival will be *Pericles*, which Nugent Monck, Director of the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, is producing on 15th August.

A new Bridie play, *Old Nobility*, to be directed by Tyrone Guthrie with Fay Compton starring, is down for autumn production by Tennent Productions Ltd. (Incidentally another new Bridie play, *John Knox*, will have its first performance at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre on 18th August.) Tennents are also presenting in the autumn a revival of Tchekov's *The Cherry Orchard*.

The Crime of Margaret Foley, by Terence de Marney and Percy Robinson, was recently brought to the Comedy Theatre after touring the provinces for two years.

Benjamin Britten's new opera, *Albert Herring*, is being performed at the Lucerne Festival from 12th-18th August, as also is his *The Rape of Lucretia*. *Albert Herring*, a vindication of Mr. Britten's idea of "chamber opera," written for a small cast, without chorus, and for an orchestra of

Over the Footlights

only twelve players, has been an immediate success. Another interesting item of opera news is that arrangements have been made for the Vienna State Opera Company to present a season of opera at Covent Garden between 16th September and 4th October.

At the Open Air Theatre, Regents Park, Robert Atkins is presenting a delightful new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and at the same time appearing himself as Bottom. The season has certainly enjoyed kindlier weather this year. There are few more delightful experiences on a warm summer evening than to watch Shakespeare played with skill and vitality against a background of sky and trees.

Last month press day came too early to mention the "Ellen Terry." This is a newly-instituted annual award which is to be presented for the best performance by an actress and an actor, and to the author of the most outstanding play of the year. A small committee, which will change in personnel from year to year, are adjudicators. The first awards went to Eileen Herlie (*The Eagle Has Two Heads*); Frederick Valk (*The Brothers Karamazov*), and Terence Rattigan, for his *The Winslow Boy*. A replica in silver of a specially designed statuette was presented to each in June by Ivor Novello at a delightfully informal gathering at the Savoy Hotel. The "Ellen" should take its place with the American "Oscar" award; an honour coveted by all aspiring actors, actresses and playwrights over here.

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F. S.

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New Shows of the Month

"And So To Wed"—New Lindsey, 16th June.

"Pygmalion"—Lyric, Hammersmith, 18th June.

"A Sleeping Clergyman"—Criterion, 19th June.

"Noose"—Saville, 20th June.

"Lady Precious Stream"—Open Air Theatre, 23rd June.

"Mary Of Magdala"—Boltons, 25th June.

"Spanish Incident"—Embassy, 1st July.

"Maya"—Arts, 2nd July.

"I Said To Myself"—Mercury, 7th July.

"Deep Are The Roots"—Wyndhams, 8th July.

"And So To Wed"

THE absurdity of the marriage service is a stale theme to-day. How much staler will it have become "some years hence" when we shall have reached Mr. Nicholas Davenport's Managerial State, now well on the way, and the period of his play, *And So to Wed*? The relationship between Stephen Church and Diana St. Valery at first appears interestingly dubious, but soon becomes boring. They have not sufficient character to hold attention. Peter Coke shouts and Olga Edwardes looks dewy. Others come and go. The company works hard but no play emerges. The decor by Richard Lake is pleasantly arty and subtly significant. It is a visual overture, giving warning that nothing fundamental will happen. The dialogue is too clever to be funny, but not serious enough to be anything else.

H.G.M.

"Pygmalion"

THE story of how a phonetician trained a Cockney flower-girl to speak "like a Duchess" for a bet, whilst the man who laid the wager quixotically destroyed his own chances by paying for clothes in which the flower-girl would feel like a duchess, is Mr. Bernard Shaw's variant of the ever-popular Cinderella romance. What is to become of Cinderella after she has been taken from her lowly life if no Prince Charming is provided? Mrs. Higgins poses this question in Act 3, when she asks what is to become of Eliza when the experiment is over. Higgins and Pickering avoid the issue then and the problem is never solved in the play. The final scene between Higgins and Eliza is lengthy but unconvincing. Many things are said that seem to have been put there because the author wanted them said somewhere and has found no earlier occasion for their utterance. The dry wordiness of this last scene is noticeable after the brisk humours of all that has preceded. Interest dies down as Doolittle departs. Indeed, his reappearance in Act 5 is a stroke of genius that save it from being one of the worst last Acts on the English stage. It is proof of the characters' great interest for us that we should want to know what becomes of them after the final curtain, but it is a dramatic weakness that we should have to read a sequel in the book in order to finish the story.

The graph of the play would show a wavy line with depressions at each curtain; for



A dramatic moment from Richard Llewellyn's gangster play, *Noose*, at the Saville Theatre. (L. to R.): Charles Goldner as Edoardo Sugiani, Elaine Garreau as Annie Foss, Frank Forsyth as Basher Marx and Nigel Patrick as "Bar" Gorman. *Noose* is a Reunion Theatre production.

Picture by
Houston Rogers



A glimpse from *The Voice of the Turtle*, John Van Druten's Broadway success, at the Piccadilly Theatre. The three characters are played by, L. to R.: Margaret Sullivan, Audrey Christie and Wendell Corey; and the picture gives an excellent idea of the ingenious stage set.

the curtains are very weak and there is little that can be done about it. Brenda Bruce's capers at the end of Act 4 are inconsistent with the preceding action and with the subsequent dialogue in Act 5. From her first appearance she shows the proper spirit of Eliza and her whole performance is made convincing because the memory of the flower-girl is always there. When Eliza has been cleaned, clothed and trained, she appears transfigured rather than transformed. So gifted an actor as Mervyn Jones could not fail to make Doolittle enjoyable, but he is rather light for the part. Alec Clunes gives a tall and handsomely hirsute Higgins, impulsive and domineering in voice and presence. Why need he handicap himself with a comic knicker-bocker suit when he hurries to Chelsea, to his mother's flat, to tell her that Eliza has bolted? Is it calculated to help along that sticky final passage between Higgins and Eliza? Winifred Evans is admirable as Mrs. Pearce, that sweetly sane ideal of all English landladies. H.G.M.

"A Sleeping Clergyman"

THIS excellent revival confirms that James Bridie is among the great playwrights; an author with something to say and a special way of saying it. One barely notices that the play, though essentially topical at the time, was written before the last war, so fundamental is his grasp of the problems confronting mankind.

Most students of serious theatre will be familiar with the theme of heredity which underlines the plot. The Cameron blood, with its genius and amorality will out to the third and fourth generation, by which latter time genius has gained the upper hand in defiance of all the laws of eugenics. Robert Donat plays the role of Charles Cameron, first and second, with full blooded vitality, a fine rich Scots accent and real appreciation of the biting wit of the author. Margaret Leighton, appearing in three nicely

contrasted roles, emerges as an actress of exceptional versatility and delightful stage presence. One noticed in her an ability to change with complete naturalness even the timbre of her voice. Francis Lister's performance as Dr. Marshall, the physician who links the characters together over the years, the guardian of their genius and "pardoners" of their sins, is also on the highest level. His transition from confident, early manhood to feeble old age is a special triumph. Drusilla Wills (Mrs. Hannah); John Gregson (John Hannah); and Rachel Gurney (Lady Katherine Helliwell) are others who stand out in the long cast.

The play is in nine scenes, with Arnold Bell, Russell Waters and David Evans as chorus. The production by H. K. Ayliff is speedy and efficient, and Anthony Holland's scenery and costumes interesting interpreters of the theme.

F. S.

"Noose"

IT comes as a shock that the West End has its gangster world no less than Chicago; after seeing this realistic play one hopes fervently that such an unsavoury aspect of post-war London will pass with the disappearance of the black market. If there had been no newspaper reports of such gangster activities Richard Llewellyn's strong play would have convinced us of their existence. Written in eleven swiftly moving scenes, *Noose* is both exciting and salutary. It tells of Sugiani, a gangster of pathological tendencies, against whom the police are powerless, and how a group of ex-Servicemen—mostly Commandos—bring about his downfall.

Charles Goldner's Sugiani is masterly and there are splendid performances from Nigel Patrick as the gangster's chief henchman; Michael Hordern as leader of the anti-gangsters; and Patricia Hilliard as the journalist who acts as decoy. Elaine Garreau contributes a fine emotional performance as the gangster's "moll" who suffers an untimely end.

F. S.



FAITH BROOK

daughter of Clive Brook, gives a brilliant performance in *Deep Are The Roots*, James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau's play about the American colour bar, at Wyndham's Theatre. (Portrait by Angus McBean.)



FRANCOISE ROSAY

co-starring at the Globe with Emyln Williams in *Trespass*, the first thriller Mr. Williams has written since *Night Must Fall*. The play—a ghost story—is set in a Welsh castle.



MIMI BENZELL

twenty-three year old opera star from the New York Metropolitan, who is playing the title role in Lee Ephraim's lavish new musical romance, *The Nightingale*, at Prince's Theatre.

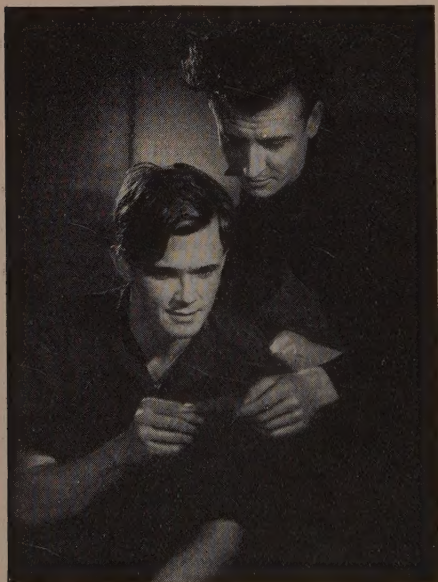
"Lady Precious Stream"

IT is a rare experience and not unpleasant, to sit behind rows of people and bask in warm, blinding sunshine, hear the simple yet stilted speeches of *Lady Precious Stream* and know that on the bare, brown

plot in front appropriately garbed actors and actresses are standing still or sitting down and occasionally moving. After the interval, the sun sinks behind the trees and one opens wide one's blinking eyes in time to see the action becoming a little brisker. The hero's flight from the affectionate Princess of the Western Regions on his imaginary horse, through the three passes, to the boundary of the Chinese Empire has always seemed to me worth the rest of the play. William Hutchison has a pretty galloping action and the Chinese music makes very agreeable accompaniment. Christine Pollon as *Precious Stream* is overshadowed by her relations; her father the Prime Minister (Wilfred Fletcher), her mother (Louise Hampton), her sister (Mary Honer) and her brother-in-law the Tiger General (Hugh Manning) providing most of what is admirable in the entertainment. Yvonne Forster as the Reader is also outstanding for clarity and grace. The costumes appear authentic, but do not blend together very well according to old-fashioned, Western ideas. H.G.M.

"Mary of Magdala"

TO present realistically New Testament personalities has the effect of making the Legend seem nearer to the trivial and commonplace than the true believer would desire or think possible. Anatole France has done this in a short story, *The Procurator of Judaea*, which is a masterpiece of irreverent irony. Such would not seem to have been Ernest Milton's object in his play, *Mary of Magdala*; indeed, his aim appears to have been to present a side



Angus McBean

Nigel Stock and Anthony Oliver as Borstal boys in Reginald Beekwith's moving play *Boys In Brown* (now at the Duchess Theatre), which was reviewed in our last issue.



HAZEL TERRY

who has an important part in Noel Coward's latest play, *Peace In Our Time*, which opened at the Lyric on 22nd July, too late for review this month. (Portrait by Alexander Bender.)



HUGH SINCLAIR

has taken over from Noel Coward the role of Garry Essendine in Mr. Coward's highly successful *Present Laughter* at the Haymarket. (Portrait by Alexander Bender.)



MARY MORRIS

gives a moving performance in *Men Without Shadows*, one of the two plays by Jean Paul Sartre in the double bill at the Lyric, Hammersmith. (Portrait by Germaine Kanova.)

view of what has been called "the most significant cycle of events in history" with adequate impressiveness; but can this be done on the stage, where of necessity pretence, distortion and false emphasis must be used, albeit artistically, to make a show? Mary of Magdala, from the little we know of her, may well have been a rather theatrical figure, but it has become unusual so to regard her. Catherine Lacey makes her seem a nervy but self-willed poseuse who, in her search for a new attitude, has adopted Nazarene ecstasism and been overwhelmed by it. The result shows the disturbance suffered in a civilised household when one of its principal members begins to take religion seriously. For, in Mr. Milton's play, Mary is living with her protector, Quintus Superbus, a Roman official, in his house in Jerusalem. Quintus, a complete materialist, is the most dignified and convincing person in the play. John Wyse gives him a philosophic nobility of character that makes apt his second name. He is necessarily prolix, but never prosy. His memory pardonably fails once or twice, for his part is too wordy in the first half of the play. He is greatly helped here by a perfect listener from Britain, well played by John Witty. In a rather numerous cast, Reginald Jarman rivets attention upon the tragic figure of Pappus, Mary's former husband.

H.G.M.

Spanish Incident

SPANISH INCIDENT, Henry Marshall's play about the adventures of three British secret agents, makes a capital evening's entertainment. There is an extra twist

to the plot which makes it terribly tight on the attention. We are told in the first scene on the best authority, by the Chief himself, in fact (how finely Wyndham Goldie can do it!), that one of the three is working for the other side! When the story takes us to Spain, we unfortunately lose touch with Wyndham Goldie but we are met with the compensating pleasure of George Curzon's company in the part of a very suave and correct gentleman, whom we instinctively mistrust, and not without justification. Well, there we are and there are many strange happenings in a beautiful Spanish house by Guy Sheppard. The only fault in the play is a very common one. When the traitor is discovered in the last scene and forced to confess and give himself up, he promptly asks for a cigarette. They always do. We know they will. We sit waiting for it, stifling a scream. Shakespeare wrote before tobacco smoking had become a national habit. Otherwise, would Iago have asked for some in the last Act of *Othello*? Perish the thought.

H. G. M.

"Maya"

SO deeprooted is the ostrich-like English aversion to facing up to the problem of the prostitute that it is difficult to judge this adaptation by Virginia and Frank Vernon of Simon Cantillon's play. One feels instinctively that it should be produced in French and acted by French players. Allowing for this it must be admitted that the Arts Theatre version is most praiseworthy and Norman Marshall's production rich in atmosphere. And before judging Vivienne Bennett's Bella as too gentle and



GENEVIEVE MOULIN and VLADIMIR DOKOU-DOVSKY, members of the Original Ballet Russe Company, now at Covent Garden, in the Bluebird Suite of *Aurora's Wedding*.

refined, it must be remembered that she symbolises the Woman all men are seeking—and never find. It seems arbitrary to assert that all prostitutes—even those in cosmopolitan seaports—are necessarily crude and heartless.

Most moving of the nine scenes are Scene 4, Bella's interlude with the Norwegian (John Edmund), and Scene 7, Bella's tender dialogue with Fifine (Muriel Russell), the young adolescent trembling on the brink of her first love affair.

F. S.

"I Said To Myself"

IF one player serves for Hamlet, Nora Helmer, John Gabriel Borkman, Paula Tanqueray, Candida and Charlie Battle, how many are required to deploy the simple characters of a "Home Notes" storyette? In *I Said To Myself*, Miss Florida Scott-Maxwell uses seven hammers to knock out three beetles. Having so little to say, is it wise to go out of one's way to employ twice the usual number of mouthpieces to say it? What Hamlet said to himself has entered into the secret lives of generations of people the world over and does not require more than one speaker, but who will be moved to remember when Mrs. Hern triplicated tells herself to poke the fire? Deriving from the mediaeval Good and Bad Angels, Jekyll and Hyde provided a melo-

(Continued on page 36)

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A scene from Act II, Scene 3. Harold Keel and Betty Jane Watson as the happy bride and bridegroom are greeted by their friends as they stand in the porch at the back of Laurey's farmhouse.

“Oklahoma!” AT THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE

● THE phenomenal success in England of America's record-breaking musical is justly deserved. For once the critics were unanimous and the packed houses at the Lane have left no doubt that *Oklahoma!*, for all its American background and feeling, has a universal appeal.

The production has been reviewed at length in a previous issue, but it cannot be repeated too often that this musical is a wonderful example of the team spirit. There are no stars, only a group of talented young people giving of their utmost with a freshness and vitality that strike the English theatregoer as unique.

Oklahoma! is, of course, based on the play *Green Grow The Lilacs*, by Lynn Riggs. The book and lyrics are by Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, and music by Richard Rodgers. The production is directed by

Rouben Mamoulian and full tribute must be paid to the part played by choreographer Agnes de Mille, whose ballets for this musical play are in a class apart. Another outstanding ingredient is the settings by Lemuel Ayers, and costumes by Miles White. The simplicity of the background and the clear, vivid colours of the lovely costumes contribute immeasurably to the atmosphere.

At this date the music needs no introduction, for all London is humming the many delightful tunes.

Oklahoma! is presented at Drury Lane by The Theatre Guild of New York, represented in London by H. M. Tennent Ltd. The Broadway production is now in its fifth year and there seems no reason why another musical record should not be created on this side of the Atlantic.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



An amusing scene near the opening of the play. The time is just after the turn of the century and the place Indian Territory (now State of Oklahoma, U.S.A.). Will Parker (Walter Donahue, *left*), thinking he has lost his girl, sells all the presents he has bought for her in the city to Ali Hakim, the pedlar (Marek Windheim). Ali, who fears that he may be forced to marry the same girl, is very anxious that Will should get the fifty dollars "dowry" with which he is likely to get his girl back again.

(*Below, Left*): Curly (Harold Keel), who is in love with Laurey, visits Jud Fry (Henry Clarke), villain of the piece, in the Smoke House, a miserable, dirty shack where Jud, a hired hand on Laurey's farm, lives. He is morose and sex ridden and a complete contrast to the handsome cowboy. In a scene of clever comedy spiced with drama, Curly and Jud sing "Pore Jud," a mock dirge in which Curly quietly insults his rival.

(*Below*): Another moment from Scene 2 when Curly, seeing a rope and strong hooks, suggests how easy it would be for Jud to hang himself.





(Above): Andrew Carnes (Wm. J. McCarthy) sings "The Farmer and the Cowman," one of the hit numbers of the show, at the party at the Skidmore Ranch (Act II, Scene 1.)



(Left): The wild whirling dance which follows Andrew's song. Kneeling in the centre is Remington Olmstead, Jr., a principal dancer.

(Right): A tense moment during the auctioneering of the hampers. The rivals, Curly and Bud, try to outbid each other for Laurey's favour. In the end Curly parts with all his possessions and wins the day.

(Left): Betty Jane Watson as Laurey.





The party at Skidmore gets rough. Farmers and cowboys, the rivals in Oklahoma (personified by Jud and Curly), begin to fight it out. They are quelled by the sound of pistol shots fired by Aunt Eller (Mary Marlo, left).



(Left): Will Parker arouses the jealousy of flighty Ado Annie Carnes (Dorothea Macfarland), "The girl who can't say no," by paying attention to two dancing girls (Béatrice Lynn and Maria Harriton), who typify a bachelor's freedom of life. Their number is called "All, er Nothin'."

(Right): A close-up of Will Parker and Ado Annie, who provide the comedy highlights of the show. Ado Annie's "I can't say no" is a big hit number.



(Below): During the party Jud Fry follows Laurey and embraces her against her will. The scene is Skidmore's Kitchen Porch (Act II, Scene 2).

(Below): All is well when Curly comes along and the two young people, having settled their differences, decide to get married.





Gertie Cummings (Jacqueline Daniels) surprises the girls by the announcement of her wedding. A moment from Act II, Scene 3.

After Curly and Laurey's wedding, Jud Fry turns up and there ensues a duel to the death with Curly. Curly is the survivor. The Sheriff is persuaded to overlook the matter so that the young bride and bridegroom can go off on their honeymoon to the accompaniment of the delightful songs "Oklahoma" and "Oh! What a Beautiful Mornin'."



(Right): Tom D'Arcy, M.P. (Hubert Gregg, centre), posing as Lt.-Cmdr. Peter Fraser, R.N., soon finds himself in difficulties. In the wardroom of HMS Mercury Susan Lashwood (Pamela Matthews), ex-Wren, and a born diplomatist, words a suitable reply to an awkward signal while Lt. Lashwood (Anthony Holmes) and Sub-Lt. Dobson (John Ainsworth) look on.

PICTURES

BY

HOUSTON-

ROGERS

Peter Fraser: We lift it into the air!
Admiral: What—the Navy?

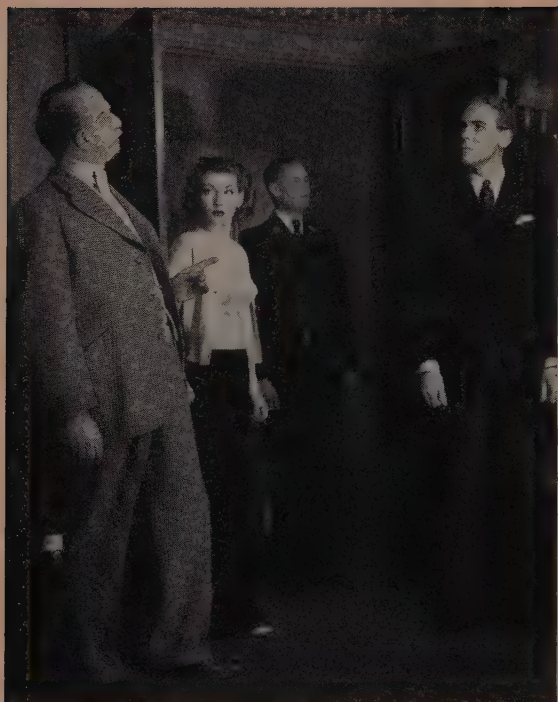
At the same time, in the living room at Admiralty House, Portsmouth, the real Lt.-Cmdr. (Bill Gates), posing as M.P., tries to persuade Admiral Sir Maximilian Godfrey, K. C. B., R.N. (Hugh Wakefield) that the Navy must become airborne.



"Off the Record"

AT THE APOLLO

● THE new Ian Hay-Stephen King-Hall naval comedy is a popular addition to London's lighter entertainment. The authors are quite at home in a manoeuvre of this kind, and the story of how an M.P. changes place with the new Commander of a destroyer is the occasion for many amusing situations and sly digs at Admiralty red tape. The play should continue to amuse London theatregoers for a long time to come.



Peter Fraser: Oh! I thought you meant her!

The masquerading M.P. is a little at sea when Sir Henry Tomkinson, M.P., diehard Tory (*Roger Maxwell*), asks him if he is a Maiden. (Centre): *Eve Ashley* as Jane Godfrey, the Admiral's daughter.

Lt. Lashwood: He fired a torpedo which sank a coal barge.

Admiral: What, with the present shortage!

Susan's brother brings news of the happenings aboard *HMS Mercury* as a result of which the Admiral orders that the Lieut.-Commander is to be detained as a suspected mental case.



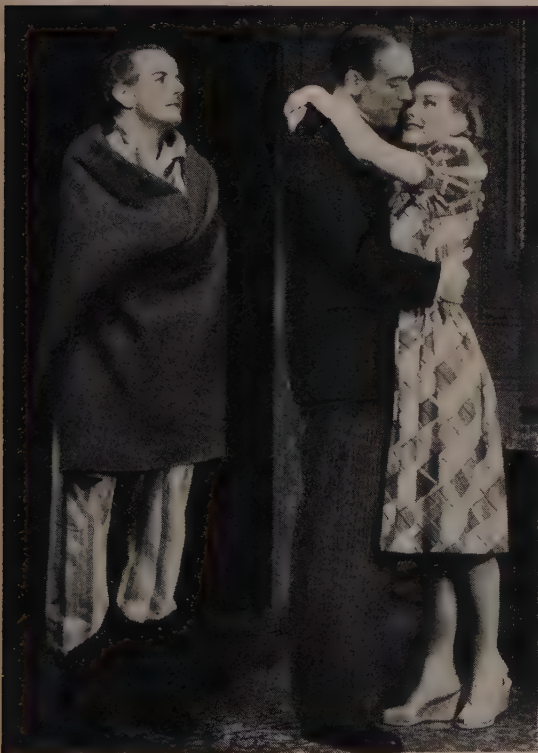
Admiral: Get out and take your pocket book with you.

The Admiral's Flag-Lieut., Lt. The Hon. Willy Aughton-Formby, R.N. (Tom Gill), is a likeable nitwit whose hobby is the study of the peerage.



(Below): Tom D'Arcy, who has escaped from the lunatic asylum, finds his fellow conspirator in the arms of Jane Godfrey.

(Below): Tom and Susan also have a soft spot for each other and Susan helps Tom's getaway in the Admiral's cap and coat.

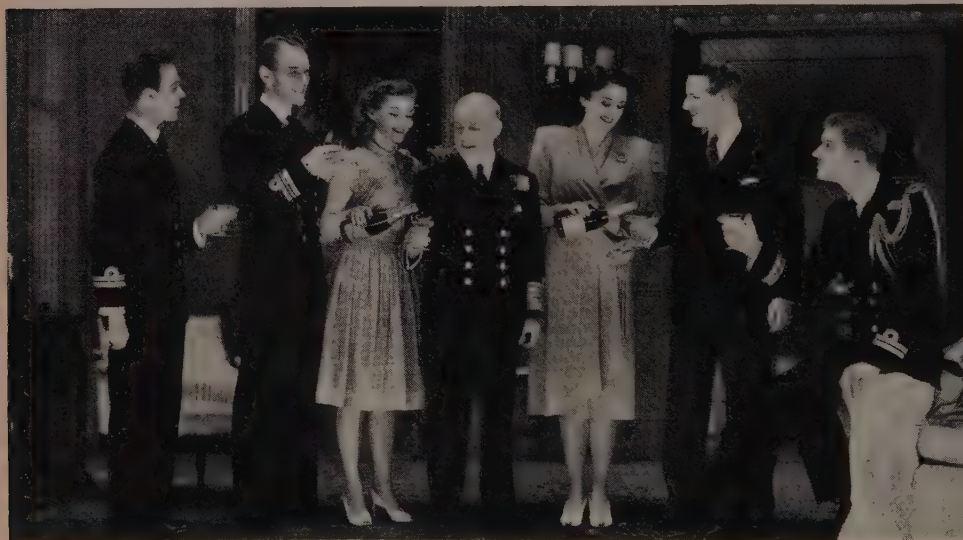




When all is discovered, Peter Fraser, though under arrest, declares his love for the Admiral's daughter.



The Hon. Willy : Have some coffee, old man?
The Flag-Lieutenant proves a lenient jailer.



The Admiral : I'll give you a toast : "The Navy and the House of Commons can do anything off the record !"

The final scene. The Admiral has at last been persuaded to appreciate the joke perpetrated on him when Naval Officer and Politician changed jobs.

"He Who Gets Slapped"

A TRIBUTE TO A BRILLIANT BUT UNLUCKY PRODUCTION



ROBERT HELPMANN as "Prince" and AUDREY FILDES as Consuela.

IT sometimes happens that a series of misfortunes attends the production of a West End play, forcing an unexpected and undeserved early withdrawal. A number of letters from readers have reached these offices deploring the unhappy fate of *He Who Gets Slapped*, further encouraging us in our intention to pay tribute to an outstanding piece of theatre which received scant justice from the critics.

Those who were fortunate enough to see the play at the Duchess Theatre will carry with them a memory of an unusually atmospheric production full of colour and movement, a tribute to Tyrone Guthrie's brilliant direction and Fanny Taylor's impressive decor. The acting down to the smallest part was on the highest level. We remember particularly Robert Helpmann's restrained yet moving performance as the Clown; Audrey Fildes' unawakened beauty; Arnold Marlé's "Papa" Briquet; Ernest Milton's Count and Margaret Diamond's Lion Tamer. On the whole the critics turned a blind eye to these aspects and chose only to quibble about Andreyev's symbolism. Perhaps we have grown out of "problem" plays just as the Royal Academy nowadays rarely presents us with "problem" pictures, after the manner of the

last century. We think we could not do better than quote the programme note in explanation, and while the pictures in the ensuing pages can give no idea of the production's colour, we hope nevertheless that readers will glimpse something of the quality of the play.

"Andreyev's play may be taken at face value as one more melodrama about the painted smile and breaking heart, or one may look farther and find a meaning over and above the literal meaning — an interpretation as well as a story.

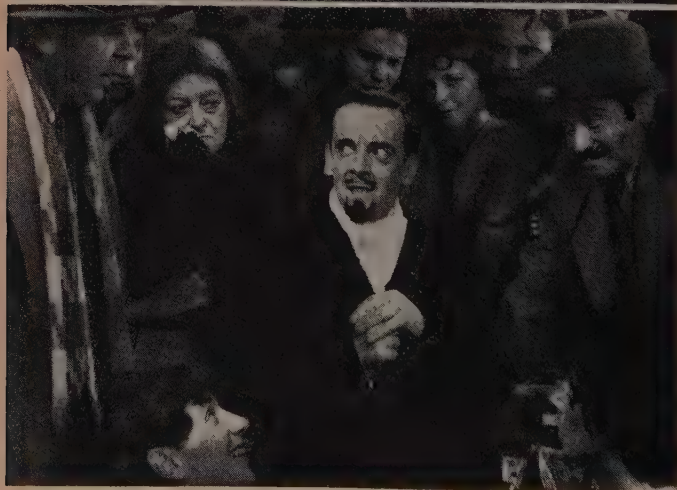
"Andreyev sees the more sophisticated characters as the unhappiest — Prince and Zinaida long for an animal simplicity that they have outgrown. They are attracted to Consuela and Bezano, who are described as 'asleep,' 'unawakened gods,' 'unpolished jewels,' who are really animals in their physical beauty and spiritual simplicity. Briquet, who cannot read or write, and the other circus people are contrasted in their contented simplicity with the outer world, symbolised by the Gentleman and the Baron whose neurotic illnesses are the penalty of complexity and wealth; and the Count Mancini who has inherited the extravagant desires of a long line of ancestors but no money to gratify them."



The action of the play takes place in a circus in a provincial city on the Continent, about 1920. In the picture the impetuous Count Mancini, "father" of Consuela, bare-back rider, asks the Manager of the Circus for a loan. (*L. to R., seated*): Arnold Marlé as "Papa" Briquet, Margaret Diamond as Zinaida, and Ernest Milton as Count Mancini.



A stranger arrives and asks if he can join the Circus. In the foreground are two of the clowns, Polly (Peter Varley), a consumptive, and Tilly (Alfie Bass), who is dumb.



The members of the company gather around while Jackson, the chief clown (Stanley Ratcliffe, *left*), puts the newcomer through his paces. He wants to be a clown and Jackson asks him to smile.

"Papa" Briquet and Zinaida learn that the stranger is an aristocrat seeking escape from life. They agree to keep his identity secret and henceforth he is known as "Prince."



Consuela is being pursued by Baron Renard (Erich Pohlmann). The unscrupulous Count, her supposed father, encourages his attentions, hoping that a wealthy marriage will result. Consuela, who is much loved by the circus folk, has an ethereal beauty, though her accent is commonplace and her education nil.



"Prince" comes from the ring after his first performance which has been a big success. His special "line" of allowing himself to be slapped has brought forth roars of laughter, and Tilly and Polly give a demonstration.





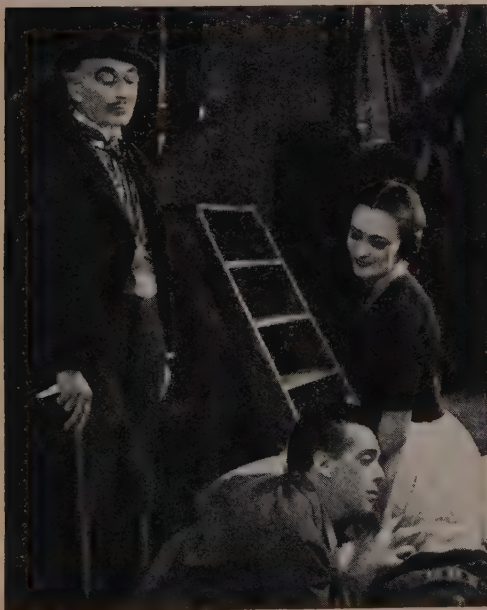
Zinaida, a strange, unhappy personality, who is for ever longing to gain complete mastery over her lions, returns from her act on this occasion in an ecstatic mood of exultation.

"Prince," who has fallen in love with the beautiful Consuela, in a moving scene tries to lift her soul to the heights and awaken her imagination. For a fleeting moment she seems to glimpse the inner meaning of his passion.

The clown receives a visit from the man who has not only stolen his wife but has achieved in life everything that "Prince" desired for himself. The argument which ensues is in fact an argument with himself.

(Below, left): The Count takes every opportunity to discourage the friendship which is growing up between "Prince" and Consuela.

(Below, right): Consuela and Bezano (Leonard White), her young trainer. These two, though they do not realise it, are in love with each other, a fact which had not escaped Zinaida, who is also infatuated by Bezano's youth and good looks.





Consuela bids farewell to her friends before her wedding to the Baron. "Prince" is heartbroken, knowing full well that the young girl has been sacrificed to the Count's ambitions.



The tragic last moments of the play. In despair "Prince" poisons both himself and Consuela and she dies in his arms. After their first shock Consuela's friends turn on the clown, but he too is dead before they can call the police.

Whispers from the Wings

By
LOOKER ON

GEORGES GUÉTARY came, saw and conquered London in a night. Nothing so sensational has occurred since Maurice Chevalier first descended upon us in 1919, succeeding Owen Nares as leading man to the inimitable Elsie Janis in *Hullo, America*, at the Palace. To the part of Pierre Fontaine, French hero of *Bless The Bride*, Guétary brings a romantic stage presence, dazzling good looks and a voice born to caress such haunting melodies as "Ma Belle Marguerite." Being one of the great operetta performances of the decade, one feels that Guétary's Parisian admirers ought to have a chance of seeing him in this part which will be talked-of for years — like Peggy Wood in *Bitter-Sweet* and Mary Ellis in *Music In The Air*.

But would Paris like *Bless The Bride*, even with their adored Guétary? When the question was put to this dynamic young Frenchman in his dressing-room at the Adelphi the other night, he replied: "*Bless The Bride* is essentially English with its scenes at Mayfield Grange and songs about Croquet, Ducky and Thomas Trout. Before it stood a chance of success in Paris I think the action would have to be set in France, and I would have to become an Italian instead of a Frenchman, in order to give the plot a dash of foreign charm! The music would appeal because such a melody as 'I Was Never Kissed Before' has the same international appeal as *Rose Marie*, which captivated pre-war Paris.

"Just as *Bless The Bride* is too English, I think *Oklahoma* and *Annie, Get Your Gun* are too American to succeed in Paris. They are, of course, foreign to London, too. They are strange to playgoers of both capitals, but in the West End for a number of years you have been accustomed to American productions from Broadway. Apart from musicals, you have had straight plays such as *Born Yesterday* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*—so when you get a musical in the American idiom it does not come as such a shock. The technique of these American musicals is superb. The authors make the most of everything, but I feel the decor and the costumes might have been more tastefully designed if the productions had been staged in Europe in the first place.

"Operetta has not really had a fair chance in Paris since I first appeared there ten years ago. Consequently I have only played in revue and musical comedy. *Bless The Bride* is the first operetta of my career. It is an expensive form of production, not easily staged in Paris during the years immediately preceding the war, when money was not spent too readily. Throughout the war years it was right out of the question.

"The Occupation influenced public taste in Paris. Money was scarce and materials



Denis de Marney

GEORGES GUÉTARY

were in short supply. It was impossible to stage a show on the lavish scale to which you have been accustomed at the Adelphi and the Coliseum, so managers never gave operettas a second thought—they turned to variety and revue, which were easier to present, despite restrictions and lack of material. Revue is still the most popular form of light entertainment in France. Straight comedies with small casts are often superbly played and enjoy very long runs, as times of austerity do not adversely affect their presentation.

"London provides more fruitful soil for operetta. West End theatres draw on a potential audience of twelve million people. Paris has only five. There is more money on this side of the Channel, far more people and more plentiful supplies of material, so one would expect operetta to flourish. A serious attempt is being made to obliterate the harm done to Paris theatres during the Occupation. The French delegates who came to London to attend the recent congress of the International Confederation of Authors' and Composers' Societies expressed their intention of doing everything possible to re-establish theatrical life in Paris on a pre-war footing. The French have a reputation for quick recovery after devastating wars—so maybe they will soon be enjoying gay operettas which, after so long an absence, will come as something of a novelty to Parisian theatregoers."



PEGGY ASHCROFT

ONE frequently meets talent scouts at the theatre. They strike lucky now and again, discovering a Dresdel, a Herlie or a Hiller to spice our theatrical fare. They have an even more wearisome existence than play-readers. They haunt obscure repertory theatres and Sunday producing societies in the hope of encountering a new Sarah Siddons to make a fortune for the managers and the film companies. They are always watching artists whose praises are yet unsung—hoping to be clever enough to detect diamonds in their roughest state. It is not easy, but maybe observers of already polished diamonds have an even more difficult task.

I am thinking of those officials who advise the King regarding Birthday and New Year Honours. An actor becomes a Knight, an actress becomes a Dame "for services to the theatre." They are naturally already established figures chosen from diamonds that have been glittering in the theatrical firmament for some time. Making a final choice must be a tricky and intricate business, unless an outstanding performance leaps to mind to precipitate the decision.

Such a performance is being given in the West End at this moment by Peggy Ashcroft in *Edward, My Son*, at His Majesty's.

Actors as Authors

By ERIC JOHNS

It is one of the great acting experiences of the year, deserving rather more permanent recognition than her regular nightly curtain calls. Miss Ashcroft has been adorning our stage for a number of years. One readily recalls the beauty of her Juliet, her Duchess of Malfi and her Irina in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Her Evelyn Holt in *Edward, My Son*, is something quite different. It is not an exquisite performance merely for the delight of the intellectuals. It is a study of Everywoman which touches all our hearts. It is the tragedy of a likeable soul rewarded with a worthless son and an unsuccessful marriage. To use her own phrase, she becomes "a maudlin, drunken old woman." If Miss Ashcroft plays a new part every season for the next thirty years, I shall still recall her Evelyn Holt with that retarded walk, the thick speech, the dyed hair and that fruitless attempt to drown bitterness in drink.

No actress can score so tremendous a success without a good part, and it occurred to me that as the play has been written by Noel Langley and Robert Morley, some measure of Miss Ashcroft's success might be due to the fact that her part was partly conceived by an actor, who naturally knows what artists want in the way of "meat." She had never previously been in a play with the author continually on the spot during rehearsal. It was an advantage to work with an author who is an actor, still enjoying popularity and live contact with the theatre—not one who has long forgotten the smell of greasepaint. It meant that the rehearsals of *Edward, My Son*, transformed the stage into a theatre-workshop. Material, lines and situations could be changed in an instant to get the best possible effects.

"Actor-authors are apt to be more tolerant," observed Miss Ashcroft, "than dramatists who merely write and have little or no working knowledge of the theatre. Actor-authors invariably permit a change. They see the actor's point of view, and they are more elastic as writers. They know the difficulties of the actor's job and as a rule don't write parts beyond the scope of the player. They don't usually ask the impossible. If by chance they do, and the actor points it out at rehearsal, something is done about it, saving the situation to the satisfaction of all concerned.

"I don't think actors should be allowed to change the script on every occasion they encounter a difficulty. It is bad for them always to have their own way. It is the line of least resistance. If they are artists worth their salt they will face up to their problems in most cases and find a way of

(Continued on page 32)

OUR CONTRIBUTOR, **HUGH BARTY-KING**, DISCUSSES THE FORTHCOMING BALLET RAMBERT TOUR THROUGH THE EYES OF SARA LUZITA, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL DANCERS

On the right Miss Luzita is seen packing her costumes in readiness for the great adventure.



Duncan Melvin

Ballet Rambert for Down-Under

SARA LUZITA is looking forward to August 23rd with mixed feelings. It is the day she leaves England, London, home—for Australia.

As a member of the Ballet Rambert company who are off to the other side of the world on a ten-month tour under the wing of the British Council, she is excited and thrilled at the thought of all that lies ahead. Sara has been with the company for four years. She started in the corps de ballet like everyone else, and is now one of the principal dancers. Rambert fans will remember her as the Duck in *Peter and the Wolf*, the Woman in His Past in *Jardin Aux Lilas*, in *Gala Performance*, and many other roles.

She went on a five-month ENSA tour of Italy in 1945, and that seemed an eternity. Out of the theatrical swim of the West End for twice as long, what big opportunity was she going to miss? Would the managers still remember her when she returned?

But then you couldn't have your cake and eat it. And what a Cake it was indeed!

There had been talk of the tour ever since last Christmas; it had been the main topic of conversation in Sara's dressing room ever since the mysterious "Mr. O'Connor" from down-under was seen confabbing with Business Manager John Dowey at the King's, Hammersmith, in November.

Rumours were rife—and generally right. Mr. O'Connor was the agent of Sir Benjamin Fuller—whoever he was. Sir B. was Fuller Theatres—whatever they were. Fuller Theatres was the Moss Empires of Australia. And . . . ? Yes. The company . . . to Australia . . . next summer. Quite unofficial of course!

About the second week at Sadlers Wells in May a notice was posted by the Stage Door announcing the names of the people who were invited to go on the Australian Tour. It had all been settled before really, but there it was, "official."

There were 30 names. Madame Rambert herself, the company's famous director; 22 dancers headed by Sally Gilmour and Walter

Gore, the leads; Foster Clarke, conductor of the orchestra; John Dewey, business manager; Michael Davidson, stage director; Mary Verney, stage manager; two wardrobe mistresses and pianist.

A few days later Sara got her contract to sign, and there was no turning back. She would dance with the company for 40 weeks; while travelling and rehearsing she would get half salary; Equity ensured there was no danger of getting stranded. They were to leave on August 23rd.

* * *

Bit by bit Sara came to learn details of what lay in store.

They were going the unusual way via America; they sailed in the *Acquitania* from Southampton. Everyone would travel together—Mme. Rambert, principals and everyone. There would probably be "class" (rehearsing) on deck most days and whenever possible during the land journey.

They were taking almost their entire repertoire—34 ballets. The greater part of the scenery—about 15 tons of it—and some 15 "skips" (baskets) of costumes were going ahead by the ordinary sea route on August 1st. The company had a three weeks' wait at San Francisco and hoped to look in at Los Angeles and Hollywood, and were taking costumes and scenery for one or two pieces on the off-chance of giving the odd performance en route—parts of *Facade*, the *pas de trois* from *Lac des Cygnes*, *Bluebird*, *Confessional* and *Death and the Maiden*. Sara, who specialises in Spanish dancing, will take a skip of her own full of Spanish costumes in the hope (with the full sanction of Mme. Rambert) of giving a cabaret or recital, or a few lessons.

They would land at Sydney, and then by train to Melbourne, there to open at the first of Sir Benjamin Fuller's theatres, the Princes, on October 4th.

There would be a fortnight in Melbourne before they opened; a fortnight in which Foster Clarke would have to assemble and

rehearse Australian musicians to form a workable 30-piece theatre orchestra; a fortnight in which to rehearse the nine Australian girls in *Giselle*, *Lac des Cygnes* and *Les Sylphides*, who would join the company on arrival to make up the corps de ballet (many girls hearing of the tour have already sent their photographs to London in anticipation).

Two and a half months at Melbourne would be followed by a month each at Perth and Adelaide, ending with at least three months at the Mayfair Theatre, Sydney, which would bring them right into July. After that they would possibly go to New Zealand, and on the way home there might be an engagement at Ceylon.

As Sara's next ten months gradually took

shape in her mind, present problems became all the more pressing. There was vaccination, and passports, which were simple enough. There was choosing what to buy with the 60 extra clothing coupons for "tropical climates," which took a little more thinking out. Sara's immediate future consisted of three summers one after the other—English, Australian Christmas and English 1948!

A ballet dancer's biggest headache is always shoes. Sara uses a pair a week—and the supply in Australia, they say, is worse than over here. But Sara won't have to worry her head about that—it's all being safely taken care of by Business Manager John Dowey. Shoes have always been his worry—the company's shoe bill comes to £35 a week—and for a long time now he's been buying up every ballet shoe he can lay hands on. They will be shipped off with the rest of the advance cargo on August 1st. He will then maintain the supply by having baskets of them flown out to Australia by freight plane every week, taking ten to fourteen days.

He has also bought 1,500 yards of silk net at 8s. 11d. a yard for renewing classical ballet skirts. That will also go out the long sea route on August 1st.

Sara is very glad on this occasion, by the way, to be over 18. John Gilpin, the company's second leading dancer, and one of our most talented and delightful performers, is 17. Before he could leave England on a tour of this sort, "the authorities" had to be satisfied he was not being kidnapped against his will, that his parents were agreeable, that his leaving the country had nothing to do with the White Slave Traffic! Someone had to be personally responsible for John Gilpin throughout the tour and see that he returned to England as he left it. George Chamberlain, licensee of Sadlers Wells Theatre, assured Scotland Yard that John Dowey was a suitable person to undertake this responsibility, and "stood bond" for him to the tune of £100. Messrs. Chamberlain and Dowey, the Gilpin parents, and Gilpin *filis*, then had to appear before a Bow Street magistrate to be granted the necessary permit.

Sara was at least spared all that. Her friend Margaret Hill escaped it too, but only by a week. Her birthday is on 16th August—her 18th!

* * *

So Sara Luzita is all set now for the Sunday "train call" at Waterloo, when the platform will be thronged with wet-eyed mothers, fathers and sisters, friends, fans and well-wishers come to give an enthusiastic send-off to the first British ballet company ever to visit Australia.

Good-bye Sara! Good-bye Ballet Rambert!—and good luck.

Alas, Poor William !

OF ERRORS

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One often hears the tall story about English people's ignorance of their immortal playwright and his works. None could have been more surprised than Miss Hannchen Drasdo when she spotted this poster in Hull, purporting to advertise the Drasdo Repertory Company's production of *A Comedy of Errors*! We thought printers were knowledgeable folk!

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

THE 1947-48 theatrical season in New York has got off to a typical summertime start—slow, languorous and enervating. The first production, *Louisiana Lady*, seemed determined to prove that either the American musical comedy stage never produced *Oklahoma!* or that if it did, it shouldn't have for it's killed such "wonderful" ideas for musicals as having an innocent schoolgirl come home to find her mother managing a brothel, and such "marvellous" song ideas as "I Want to Live—I Want to Love," "The Night Was All to Blame" and "Beware of Lips That Say, 'Cherie.' " The second production saw that excellent comedienne, Mary Boland, trapped in her return to the stage in a feeble comedy about the housing shortage called *Open House*, and while the third production, *Laura*, by Vera Caspary and George Sklar, based on Miss Caspary's novel, is a vast improvement, it still comes off second-best to the intriguing motion picture Twentieth Century-Fox made a few years back and its chances of finding a stage audience are slim.

This stage version of *Laura*, we believe, was first seen in London after the general release of the motion picture, where it failed with Sonia Dresdel in the title role. However, New York producer, Hunt Stromberg, Jr., felt it could still make money in America, and lined up a production last season headed by Miriam Hopkins, Otto Kruger and Tom Neal. This he sent out on the road and while business was fairly brisk, the production was too expensively hooked up to show a profit and Mr. Stromberg eventually decided against bringing the show to New York. In spite of this unhappy stage record, several months later H. Clay Blaney and S. P. and Roy P. Steckler somehow came to the conclusion there was still money to be made with *Laura* and accordingly bought the handsome Stewart Chaney setting and properties from Mr. Stromberg and proceeded to re-cast and send the play out on the road again. John Loder was signed to play Waldo Lydecker, the part created by Clifton Webb in the film and played by Otto Kruger in the previous stage version, while K. T. Stevens and her husband, Hugh Marlowe, who had toured the country rather extensively and successfully in a road company of *The Voice of the Turtle*, were signed to play Laura and the detective, Mark McPherson. Business on tour was nothing exciting, but the notices were fairly good and the cast itched to get a Broadway hearing. So with one

major cast change — John Loder left the play in Chicago to go back to his wife, Hedy Lamarr, in Hollywood, and Otto Kruger took over once again—*Laura* braved New York. The notices were under expectations, but the producers have hopes of playing through the summer with the aid of "Two for Ones." These "Two for Ones," abbreviated like everything else over here to "twofers," are making their first appearance since the war. The management prints thousands of these tickets; distributes them over the metropolitan area and the suburbs and when they are presented at the box-office the bearer gets two seats for the price of one. The purpose obviously is to help shows doing moderate business to get by—cover operating expenses with the hope that if it stays on the boards long enough it will catch on. However, so far the new shows have not benefited from these "twofers," but rather long run popular hits like *The Voice of The Turtle* have profited from this bargain scheme.

Looking down the list of plays current on Broadway, we notice that two of them have never been mentioned in these pages: the revival of *Burlesque* by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins, produced originally way back in 1927, and *A Young Man's Fancy*, by Harry Thurstwell and Alfred Golden.

Burlesque has been with us since Christmas and its success as far as we can determine is based on the fine dramatic performance given by Bert Lahr, one of America's favourite comedians, in the role created by the late Hal Skelly; the outrageously funny old-time burlesque revue which climaxes the show, and the title which lures out-of-towners who think they're getting the real thing. Another asset at the beginning of the run was the appearance of the gorgeous Jean Parker in the role which sent Barbara Stanwyck soaring to Hollywood fame. However, Miss Parker decided she'd like to play the Betty Field role in *Dream Girl* in the summer theatres and has since left the cast.

A Young Man's Fancy is a minor item about a sissy in a children's summer camp who becomes a real, red-blooded American boy before the evening and the summer is over. The life-giving red blood which has put the play into its third month, however, is a clever advertising campaign and those "twofers."

Notwithstanding London's own verdict on

Continued overleaf)

Life With Father, it is interesting to record that the "world's longest run" is terminating its Broadway engagement after 3,213 performances—31 more times than *Tobacco Road*, the previous record holder. For those who want to know how many years go into making up 3,213 performances, *Life With Father* made its Broadway debut at the Empire Theatre on 8th Nov. 1938. The same night *Father* ends his life, *Oklahoma!* will be 1,836 performances young, which makes it the new current long run champion.

Actors as Authors (Continued from page 28)

solving them by means of their craft. The dramatists cannot always be expected to give way to the actor.

"Actor-authors do not construct their plays as firmly as writers who have no relation to the acting profession. The actor-dramatists rely more upon their cast to bring the work to life, which means that their plays often have no existence apart from their performance in the theatre. In other words, they are what is known as 'good theatre,' but after all the main object of any play is to be at its best when acted.

"When they come to write, actors know the value of stage-business. They know how effectively a scene can be heightened by the use of certain properties or without the aid of the spoken word. Often enough the actor writes rather naturalistic dialogue; the writer is more likely to pursue a definite style. He revels in curious bits of characterisation, which means that even his small parts are histrionic gems. The minor parts in any play by Emlyn Williams or Noel Coward offer endless scope for the artist.

"My present part of Evelyn Holt is really an Everywoman role, which means that it is richly rewarding and easier to play than the classics. In real life I know the character quite well, which means that each member of the audience knows her, too. It is a slice of life too familiar to most of us. With the classics, things are different.

"Take the Duchess of Malfi. Before an actress can play the part she has to form her own individual conception of the character. No one knows the truth about the Duchess. The actress has to get to know her and form her own ideas about her. There is a mystery about classic parts which have to be discovered imaginatively. When the actress knows all about the Duch-

ess of Malfi and her reactions, she sets about convincing the audience that the character would react as she decides to play her. Such a part is more 'difficult to play convincingly than an Everywoman role.

"An actress leading a healthy artistic existence will enjoy playing both types of part. If she specialises in one or the other she will tend to work to a method or formula, and staleness will inevitably set in. As Lord Holt says in the play, 'The difficulties and the problems make the job worth while.' That is certainly true of acting as of any other job and I welcome this new type of part because it brings new problems and new difficulties with it—all quite different from those of Viola and Lady Teazle—demanding new solutions and bringing a new satisfaction."

Drama School Matinee

CONTRARY to past procedure, the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art presented a matinee by students at the Globe Theatre on 4th July. Judges were Miss Peggy Ashcroft, Mr. Alec Guinness and Mr. Robert Morley. Excerpts included Vanbrugh, Shaw, Wilde, Coward, and an extract from a forthcoming new play by Christopher Fry.

The curtain rose on a well contrived mime play which gave great scope to Robert Sayer as a photographer near Wimpole St. in the time of the Barretts. The Fry play should prove interesting when we get the chance to see it, judging by the admirable performances given by John Van Eyssen and Ann Jellicoe. The theme is witch hunting. The Shaw sample was *Major Barbara*. Good performances came from Penelope Munday as Rummy and David Lorraine as Peter Shirley. Coward's *Still Life* was brought to life by Ann Glyn as Myrtle; Catherine Harding and Eric Hilliard gave charming performances as Laura and Alec. Fine work was witnessed in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*—Julia Braddock was more than charming as Cecily Cardew; there was good personality playing from John Wise as Algernon; and from John Moore as John Worthing. Star of the matinee was Marjorie Dunkels. As an impromptu commère she had the stage to herself for ten minutes to create several spirited impersonations. REGINALD HEARNE.

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A Theatre Breaks New Ground

THIS STORY OF COURAGE AND OPTIMISM TELLS HOW A GROUP OF YOUNG ACTORS AND ACTRESSES SET ABOUT FOUNDING A THEATRE IN CORNWALL

THE war-time boom of the highly commercialised theatre has begun to die: imperceptibly at first, now quite definitely. Blackout, evacuation, diverted labour that had brought thousands of new faces into our audiences are things of the past. In the profession new problems are taking shape. A new generation of actors, producers, stage managers, scenic artists and the like have been joined by others returning from the services, and still more who have found therein their theatrical vocation. Aggravating the situation still further are the bomb levelled theatres of our cities, and the numberless hostels and forces theatres that were flourishing in such profusion two years ago, but which now stand empty and stripped of their furnishings, or converted to the needs of a new era.

But what of the audiences that sprang up during these years? Was this exceptional demand for drama—the best drama—just a passing phase? Did the theatre provide nothing more than a diversion for countless young men and women? Consider the growth of the Little Theatre Movement and of innumerable groups and theatrical activities of all kinds. Account for the many new magazines and periodicals on theatrical matters that sprang up overnight. Ask any actor or actress whether their personal mail did not change from mere notes from admirers to thoughtful criticism, intelligent and often well informed observations. A passing phase? Surely not.

Where now were these new faces that had packed our theatres? Was it not true that many had returned to their farms, their villages, and small country towns, cut off once more from the living stage by geographical isolation. A small group of actors and actresses at least believed this to be true and decided to do something about it.

Thus it was that in January of this year, inspired by Victor Thompson and his wife, Barbara Bond, a handful of young people decided to bring the theatre to the countryside, and undaunted by pessimists and discarding many conventional ideas of what could or could not be done, selected Cornwall for their venture.

From Plymouth to Land's End is roughly a hundred miles, and in the county there was then only one regular theatre. The



Ronald Ridley and Judith Craig give a hand on the constructional work.

adjointing towns of Camborne and Redruth seemed to be an excellent choice, being the natural centre of the isolated tip of Cornwall, and drawing on a population of 35,000 persons. During the snow and gales of early March admittedly the prospect looked somewhat grim, if not hopeless. Continued search soon confirmed the local opinion that no suitable hall would be found, but the advance party of two persons came back with exciting news for the little band of people now grown to a full company eagerly awaiting their return in London. They had refound their audience. Throughout the length and breadth of the countryside they had met with innumerable groups and individuals, who were eagerly awaiting their return, anxious for fresh opportunities to see good drama and willing to play a very considerable part in making this drama a reality.

The task ahead was formidable enough, but optimism ran high. A large derelict hotel had been found in the centre of Camborne and rough plans already prepared for its conversion. Money was, of course, the most pressing problem. No fund existed to assist this wild enterprise. £1,750 was needed and with little more than a quarter of this raised in individual contributions, the company set forth for their new home. Convinced that contractors would not be found to do the work even had funds allowed, the task went ahead at once using only the company's own labour. Old walls were demolished and new ones built. Floors, roofs and even staircases took shape. From early morning until far into the night the company struggled with unfamiliar tasks, living communally and sharing a common purse. Licences were naturally

(Continued on page 35)

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Notes and Topics

SEVERAL comedies recently have made fun of bureaucracy. Of the batch, *The Man From The Ministry* achieved most success, and having just concluded its West End run at the Comedy Theatre, it may be available soon for amateurs. It is quite a good vehicle for a cast of eight men and four women, its two office interiors presenting no staging difficulties.

* * *

Henleaze Drama Club, Bristol, have chosen Pinero's *The Enchanted Cottage* for their next production. This group were chosen for the annual drama festival at the local Theatre Royal, also in the N.O.D.A. festival at Weston-super-Mare.

Edinburgh's College of Art Theatre Group has been selected to appear in that city's Festival of Music and Drama. Their play is Strindberg's *Easter*, in the Y.M.C.A. Hall on 2nd-6th September. Set and costumes by the college, and lighting, production, etc., by the students.

Rochampton Drama Club has made its mark in the Thames Valley area. It reached the final of the Thames Valley Theatre Guild Drama Festival, with *Her Affairs In Order*. They publish a magazine, conduct a library, have a social club, and play research committee.

The W5 Dramatic Club gave J. B. Priestley's *The Long Mirror* at the Questors Theatre, Ealing, on 26th July.

* * *

Workers' Music Association gave the first performance in England of Dvorak's *The Jacobin*, at King George's Hall in July. Dvorak wrote nine operas, and this work had an instant welcome from his native Prague. In association with the Arts Council, the W.M.A. are aiming at new or little known works. Last year they gave a new opera, *The Partisans*, by Inglis Gundry.

* * *

Amongst the new books received are *The A.B.C. of Stage Craft*, by Kenneth S. Allen with a foreword by Leslie Henson (Stacy & Sons, 3/-). It is a small, practical handbook of guidance for amateurs. Much of it is elementary, but there is quite a lot of good common sense on staging.

* * *

Three new plays from Deane & Sons include Stuart Ready's *The Bonny Earl O'Moray*, for a cast of six women, and *Tomorrow's Vengeance*, for two men, two women (1/6 each). Both are well-written pieces. The third play is Frank Harvey's *The Poltergeist*, which had a professional run in London. Cast is five men, four women, and the scene a vicarage living room. Gordon Harker played lead in London, and that conveys a good idea of the play (4/-).

A Theatre Breaks New Ground

(Continued from page 33)

difficult, but they too were usually obtained. Much material was salvaged from the old building, some was improvised for new uses.

To-day a modern intimate theatre is nearing completion where once stood a dilapidated ballroom, stables and garage. How far have the offers of local help been realised? An excellent committee has already assisted in raising almost all the outstanding capital, and, unasked, carpenters, electricians and plasterers are daily offering their services to complete the theatre which they regard as their own. Each evening numbers of visitors are shown round the building whilst work proceeds uninterrupted. These visitors are a potential audience and are always welcome. Local societies have offered the greatest support and co-operation. The townsfolk of Camborne and Redruth are helping because they believe the company are prepared to give them what they need in return. The stereotyped commercial theatre would undoubtedly find it heavy going in such a district. The founders of this new little theatre believe they have found a new approach. What is being done in this Cornish town might well be achieved in hundreds of similar places up and down the country.

FOR SALE—*Theatre World* from February 1943 to June 1947, minus April 1943. Best offer.—Box No. 81.

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CORRECTION

We regret that an error appeared in the July issue regarding the price of Innova Barrier Cream which should have been given as 3/1 per jar. We offer sincere apologies to our readers, some of whom have queried this with us, and for any trouble caused to Innova stockists and the manufacturers, Innova (England) Ltd.



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New Plays (Continued)

dramatic over-simplification of the complexity of personality, but Stevenson told an exciting story. The truth is that only characters that baffle attempts at analysis are interesting. Not two or three or twenty speakers could suffice for an ordinary person.

The story of Mrs. Hern is short, simple, sentimental, hackneyed and domestic. Donald Houston works hard and is occasionally amusing as a supremely self-confident planner, but he is not afflicted with the prevailing schizophrenia. Katherine Blake is very decorative and has the advantage of speaking a few lines that are true, pungent and good to say and she puts them over.

H. G. M.

"Deep are the Roots"

THIS is one of the most moving straight plays London has seen of late; and although the theme calls for considerable periods of discussion and inaction, the issues at stake are so essentially dramatic that a passage or two of sermonising do not come amiss. Over here, where the colour bar is practically non-existent, it is difficult to imagine what must have been the impact on American audiences of this brave attempt to lay bare the unbelievable cruelties arising out of the colour problem in the Southern States.

The play tells of the return home of a young educated negro who has had a distinguished war record and has met with kindness and friendliness from the white peoples of the Continent and England. But he finds that the deep rooted colour prejudice still holds in the South. When he displays his growing sense of individuality and justice he discovers that the distinguished retired Senator on whose estate he has been brought up, is turned overnight into a mortal enemy who is prepared even to stoop to a false charge of theft to bring about the young man's downfall.

This production is notable for some outstanding acting, particularly from Gordon Heath and Evelyn Ellis, coloured players from America, who give fine sensitive performances as Brett, the negro hero and his mother, and from Betsy Drake, also from New York. Miss Drake's playing of the role of the Senator's younger daughter who ultimately falls in love with Brett, her childhood playmate, is one of the most natural and sincere pieces of acting to be seen in the West End. Faith Brook scores a personal triumph in her most important role to date, that of Alice Langdon, the Senator's elder daughter who undergoes a big emotional crisis over the affair of Brett's return. Allan Jeayes' Senator Ellsworth Langdon is monumental prejudice personified, and there are other splendid performances from Alexander Gauge, Patrick Barr and Helen Martin.

F. S.

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